
2.0 BACKGROUND RESEARCH

2.1 PREVIOUS STUDIES: SUMMARY

The study team have appraised and distilled the recurring priorities and aspirations which have resulted from the numerous reports and studies carried out on Aberdeen City Centre with particular reference to the Denburn Valley/Union Terrace Gardens Area.

2.2 STAKEHOLDER CONSULTATIONS SUMMARY

Following meetings and interviews with key groups and individuals the study team have collated the statements, views and opinions expressed.

2.3 STATUTORY CONSULTATIONS SUMMARY

Following meetings and interviews with statutory authorities the study team have collated the statements, views and opinions expressed.

2.1 PREVIOUS STUDIES SUMMARY

A record of all the Previous Studies and Policy Documents which refer to Union Terrace Gardens / Denburn Valley is contained in Appendix 8.9 to this Report.

Minutes of all meetings held with Key Stakeholders are also contained in Appendix 8.9.

The following summaries capture the most repeated aims and objectives for the wider region; the City Centre and Union Terrace Gardens themselves. The aims and objectives selected are those which either affect the Union Terrace Gardens site or could be influenced by its redevelopment.

a) The Region

- Maximise our Intellectual Capital
- Attract and retain skilled people
- Be recognised as one of the most robust and resilient economies in Europe
- Be the location of choice for high level organisations operating in oil, gas, renewable energy and other high value niche markets.

b) The City

- Attract new people to stay and work in the city
- Create a new 'heart' and an area for performing arts and culture.
- Grow lifestyle onto the streets, public spaces and city centre
- Re-establish a night time economy in the city centre not dominated by drink
- Attract companies and people; retain and capture visitor and retail spend and revitalise tourism in the city centre
- Create major tourist destination in the city centre

c) Union Terrace Gardens/Denburn Valley

- Improve linkages across the city centre
- Create major public space: the new 'heart' of Aberdeen: a new civic square
- Mitigate the environmental impact of dual carriageway and railway
- Increase accessibility of gardens and their visibility
- Increase economic viability of properties along the back of Belmont Street
- Create public space with direct access from Union Street
- Provide new commercial development in Union Street to balance "off centre" retail developments.
- Consider an integrated transport interchange in the 'heart' of the city.

Statutory Consultations were undertaken with Planning, Economic Development, Estates, Roads and Infrastructure Sections of Aberdeen City Council; Historic Scotland; Network Rail; Health & Safety Executive; SEPA and SNH.

A detailed report on each of these is contained in the appendices but at the end of this initial Consultation process there have been no issues raised which would prevent the development of any of these options being delivered.

Various bodies notably Historic Scotland would require to be consulted in much greater detail but the principle of development on this scale was not rejected.

Until more detailed proposals are developed many of the issues which have been raised as 'sensitive' cannot be fully appraised.

2.2 KEY STAKEHOLDER CONSULTATIONS

The following key stakeholders were consulted during the Study period:

- ACSEF
- Aberdeen City Council
- Scottish Enterprise
- Peacock Visual Arts

Minutes and Notes of consultations with the key stakeholders are included in Appendix 8.9.

Peacock Visual Arts submitted a paper during the study period and this is included in Appendix 8.9. The views of the key stakeholders were noted and informed us during our appraisal of the 3 options.

Summary

The Analysis of background information provides two main outputs:

Firstly it guides the designs of the three options forming the basis of this study. The mutual objectives distilled from these sources has provided the aims for each of our design solutions. Secondly it provides a checklist against which each option can be assessed.

The remit for this study was not to recommend one scheme above another. It will, however, make clear what each of the options can achieve and in the case of the 'Full Raised Level' and the 'Partial Raised Level' the judgement will be one of degree of delivery against capital cost.

The enhancement scheme provides a significantly different solution, whilst it does introduce new life and improved accessibility to the gardens, by its very nature, it will not address the issues of city centre connectivity.

The overriding message from our background research is that Union Terrace Gardens are seen by a very significant section of the Community as being capable of revitalising the City Centre by creating the new 'Heart' not just to Aberdeen but also the Region. It is also seen as having the potential to create a much wider 'destination' to attract people from a national and international audience.

2.3 STATUTORY CONSULTATIONS: SUMMARY

Through the consultation process we talked to the following organisations:

- Nestrans
- Aberdeen City Council – Roads, Infrastructure, Estates, Cultural Heritage, Economic Development & Environmental Services and Archaeology Sections
- Network Rail
- Scottish Natural Heritage
- United Utilities
- SEPA
- Scottish Water
- Grampian Fire Service
- Scottish and Southern Energy
- Scottish Gas Networks

The full notes of discussion can be found in Appendix 8.10. The key outcomes from the consultation process are as follows:

- The development of a railway station as part of the scheme is viewed as not being aligned with any transportation strategy
- Improved pedestrian linkage from Union Street to the existing station is viewed as appropriate-
- Any development of a scheme must embrace all local and regional transportation strategies
- There is a desire to reduce the number of cars travelling to the city centre.
- There are no insurmountable rail related technical issues.
- Construction over the railway will require suitable possession orders but there do not appear to be any associated onerous technical issues.
- Limited information on the existing site structures was found during the reporting period. In particular no information was found on the existing piles and foundations to the reservations on the Denburn dual carriageway during the reporting period.
- Utilities information was gathered to construct the Existing Utilities drawing
- Aberdeen City Council own the large culvert that dissects the site. Access is to be maintained, a Flood Risk Assessment will be required and maintenance work may be required.
- Fire access route required to the rear of Belmont Street
- There are no insurmountable technical issues relating to addressing the Scottish Water and SEPA requirements.
- Ongoing consultation required with all consultees through any further design and appraisal stages.